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APPROVED BY CA:REFRITTS
L/EA:TJFORTUNE (SUBS)
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L/ARA:MKOZAK (SUBS)
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
RELEASED BY [illegible] DATE 2/24/81
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TO AIT TAIPEI IMMEDIATE 6707
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FOR DOUG ELLICE FROM AIT WASH, D.C.
E.O. 12065:N/A
TAGS:CASC, GY
SUBJECT: ABC PROGRAM ON JONESTOWN
REF: STATE 291166
1. SINCE REFTEL, DEPT. HAS CONSULTED WITH DEPT. OF JUSTICE ON ABC REQUEST FOR INTERVIEW. DOJ INFORMED THE DEPT. THAT THERE ARE A NUMBER OF LAWSUITS PENDING AGAINST THE USG AS A RESULT OF JONESTOWN -- INCLUDING SUITS FILED BY THE USG AGAINST THE PEOPLES TEMPLE AND BY CONGRESSMAN RYAN'S FAMILY
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PEOPLES TEMPLE SURVIVORS, AND RELATIVES OF DECEASED MEMBERS AGAINST THE USG. THERE IS ALSO A POSSIBILITY OF CRIMINAL PROSECUTIONS RESULTING FROM THE ASSASSINATION OF RYAN. THESE CASES INVOLVE A MULTITUDE OF LEGAL ISSUES INCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT'S PERFORMANCE OF DUTIES BEFORE THE TRAGEDY. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT YOU AND OTHER DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS WILL EVENTUALLY BE ASKED TO TESTIFY IN THESE PROCEEDINGS.
2. THE FOCUS OF ABC'S INTEREST, THE CARPENTER-CRIMMINS REPORT CONCERNS, INTER ALIA, THE DEPARTMENT'S PERFORMANCE BEFORE THE JONESTOWN TRAGEDY. QUESTIONING DURING THE PROPOSED INTERVIEW WILL CERTAINLY COVER MATTERS AT ISSUE IN PENDING LAWSUITS. IN VIEW OF THIS FACT, AND THE LIKELI HOOD THAT YOU WILL BE CALLED TO TESTIFY IN THESE CASES, DOJ AND THE DEPARTMENT BELIEVE THAT YOU WOULD BE JUSTIFIED IN DECLINING TO COMMENT ON ANY ASPECT OF JONESTOWN UNTIL AFTER THE LEGAL QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN SETTLED.
3. ABC WILL BE INFORMED THAT DEPARTMENT OFFICERS MAY BE INTERVIEWED IF THEY CHOOSE BUT THAT THEY WILL BE IN-
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STRUCTED NOT TO COMMENT ON ISSUES IN LITIGATION. IF YOU CHOOSE TO DISCUSS THE JONESTOWN SITUATION WITH ABC (OR TO OTHER MEMBERS OF THE PRESS) YOU SHOULD FIRST CONTACT TERENCE J. FORTUNE OF THE LEGAL ADVISER'S OFFICE CONCERNING GUIDELINES AND RESTRICTIONS WHICH MUST BE OBSERVED IN SUCH INTERVIEWS. DEAN. MUSKIE
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